

REMARKS

Receipt of the Office Action mailed March 29, 2000 is acknowledged. Claims 2, 3, 13 and 16 have been cancelled. Claims 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 17 have been amended. New claim 21 has been added. Support for the amendment can be found throughout the specification and claims as originally filed. Claims 1, 4-12, 14-15 and 17 are pending. Entry of these amendments and favorable reconsideration are earnestly solicited.

Claims 1-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as allegedly being indefinite. Claims 1-7 and 10-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Matsumoto (U.S. Patent No. 5,891,347). Claims 8, 9, 16 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Matsumoto. Claims 14 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Matsumoto in view of Steiner et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,595,655). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

1. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claims 1-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as allegedly being indefinite. Claims 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 17 have been amended herein to clarify these claims. It is respectfully submitted that these rejections be withdrawn.

2. Claims 1-7 and 10-13 are not anticipated by Matsumoto

Matsumoto relates to a centrifugal filtration method and apparatus. Matsumoto discloses that, in the operation of the centrifugal filtration apparatus, subsequent to the cleaning step, a crystal scraping step for scraping off crystal formed in the basket 20 and a drying step for drying the crystal scraped are carried out. According to Matsumoto, the crystal scraping step is practiced in such a manner that the hydraulic cylinder 37 of the crystal scraping unit 31 is driven to pivotally move the scraping blade 31C toward the peripheral wall 20a of the basket, resulting in the scraping blade 31C advancing into the crystal while keeping a rotational speed of the basket 20 reduced, so that the crystal is scraped off from the basket. (See, Col. 12, lines 7-16).

Claim 1, as amended, recites a method for clearing a product from a centrifugal basket which includes "lowering the scraper blade from an initial position in axial direction of the centrifuge basket until a starting position is reached where the scraper blade nearly touches the bottom wall of the centrifuge basket." Matsumoto does not disclose or suggest



a method for clearing a centrifuge which includes lowering a scraper blade from an initial position in axial direction of the centrifuge basket, where the scraper blade nearly teaches the bottom wall of the centrifuge basket, as claimed. In Matsumoto, the scraper blade 31C is not axially displaceable. Therefore, Matsumoto does not anticipate claim 1. Since claims 4-7 depend from claim 1, for at least this reason these claims are also not anticipated by Matsumoto.

Claim 10, as amended, recites a device for removing product from a centrifuge basket that includes a "lowering, pivoting and raising device for lowering the cleaning rod from an initial position of the scraper blade in axial direction of the centrifuge basket to a starting position." Matsumoto does not disclose or suggest a centrifuge basket that includes a "lowering, pivoting and raising device for lowering the cleaning rod from an initial position of the scraper blade in axial direction of the centrifuge basket to a starting position," as claimed. Therefore, Matsumoto does not anticipate claim 10. Since claims 11-12 depend from claim 10, for at least this reason these claims are also not anticipated by Matsumoto.

3. *Claims 8, 9 and 14-17 are not obvious*

As set forth above, Matsumoto does not disclose or suggest a method and/or a device for lowering the scraper blade from an initial position in an axial direction of the centrifuge basket to starting position, as claimed. The scraper blade 31 of Matsumoto is not axially displaceable nor does Matsumoto suggest that it could be so modified. Furthermore, Figure 3 of Matsumoto clearly shows the pivoting of the scraper blade in a pivoting direction that is opposite to the rotation direction, CL, of the centrifuge basket. Thus, if anything, Matsumoto teaches away from the instantly claimed invention. Steiner et al. ("Steiner") relates to a self-cleaning filter assembly. Steiner was relied upon by the Examiner to teach a cleaning means. Steiner does not overcome the deficiencies of Matsumoto. Thus, neither of these references, alone or in combination, disclose or suggest the claimed method and devices claimed in claims 1, 10 and 17, respectively. Therefore, these claims are patentable over Matsumoto in view of Steiner. Claims 8 and 9 depend from claim 1 while claims 14-15 depend from claim 10. For at least this reason, these claims are also patentable over Matsumoto in view of Steiner.



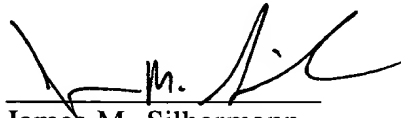
4. *Conclusion*

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully urged that the present claims are in condition for allowance. An early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. Should there be any questions, Examiner Reifsnyder is courteously invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number shown below.



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Date

Respectfully submitted,


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